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Improving Vocabulary by Teaching Roots

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Anglin, J. (1993). Vocabulary development: A morphological analysis. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 58, 1–169.

McCutchen, D., Logan, B., & Biangardi-Orpe, U. (2009). Making meaning: Morphological processes in children's word reading. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 44, 360–376.

Improving Vocabulary by Teaching Roots

Stokes, P. (2012). *Latin and Greek roots: Teaching vocabulary using hands-on activities and common objects*. Austin, TX: Pro-ED.

Reviewed by Carol Westby

As indicated in the article by McCutchen and Logan summarized in this issue of *Word of Mouth*, knowing the morphological structure of the English language promotes vocabulary development and comprehension. This book by Stokes provides a systematic strategy for teaching the meaning of Latin roots and Greek elements (e.g., prefixes such as audi, auto, geo, bio, and suffixes such as logy).

The 40 lessons have three scripted components for which the author provides the words the instructor is to use when teaching: three hands-on activities that introduce three different words with the root or element, discovery of the root or element, and defining the words with the root or element.

RESOURCE REVIEW

- Hands-on activities. During the hands-on activities, students discover a thematic word while engaging in exploratory activities, for example, discovering the thematic word *carry* by engaging in several activities that involve carrying. The students acquire a word element, *port*, which takes the place of the common word *carry*. The Latin root word *port* is acquired to replace the familiar word *carry*. Students prepare food and carry it from one place to another in the school to learn *import*—to carry something into the United States. They take turns throwing a toy across the room; throwing the toy carried it across the room or *transported* it. Students take turns speaking news through a microphone; the news is carried to others or *reported*.
- For the Greek prefix *audi*, students jump rope on a hard surface and listen to the rope hitting the ground—the rope is *audible* when it hits the ground. They listen to cell phone rings, or imitate cell phone rings, noting that some are hard to hear or impossible to hear—they are *inaudible*. Students juggle and sing in front of a group—other students who are

hearing them are encouraged to applaud. The people who are hearing the performers are an *audience*.

- Discovery of the word. In this section, the students note what is common about the words they learned in the hands-on activities. The teacher reviews the theme of the activities (e.g., carry), then asks the students what is the same in the fancy words, *import*, *transport*, *report*. The teacher then asks the students to connect the carrying theme of the three activities to the fancy words and give a simple everyday word for *port*.
- In defining the discovery words section of each lesson, the instructor engages in dialogue with the students and prompts them to connect the selected theme word, for example, “carry,” with the preselected discovery words, “import,” “transport,” “report.”

“Remember the word carry helped us to define our three fancy words. The word import means to _____ something to a new place, like a new country.” Students are to respond with the word carry. The teacher continues, “Yes, import means to carry something to someplace else, as to import apples from one country to another. The word transport means to _____ something across to someplace else.” Again, students are to supply the word carry. The teacher responds, “Yes transport means to carry something from one place across to someplace else.” Many of the words have prefixes or suffixes that should also be taught, for example,

The word transport has a prefix, *trans-* which means across.

The second half of each lesson involves reading and writing activities. The activities are available on a CD that comes with the book so teachers can print out copies.

- Students are then provided with a number of words that contain the root word or element, for example,

The Latin root *port*: airport, comport, deport, exportation, important, importer, portable, portal, portfolio, support, transportation

Or the Greek element *audi*, for example, audiotape, audit, audition, auditorium

- Students rewrite phrases, for example, a porter for the bags, to deport the bank robber, through the time portal
- Students write new sentences using the underlined words, for example,

The inventor will *export* the new computer chip to England.

The head cook chooses to use a cheese *imported* from France.

She was sad she missed the *audition* for the school play.

There was no *audio* on their old TV.

- Students copy and complete sentences such as,

A *porter*'s main responsibility is to

In a science fiction novel, a *portal* will

A TV is *portable* if

The singer had no *audience* because

His footsteps were *audible* because

The systematic framework for teaching the concepts and the multiple activities for learning and using the Latin roots and Greek elements provided by the author should promote students retention of new vocabulary words. My one concern with the book is that many of the words that are taught involve numerous prefixes and suffixes that often are not explained, for example, see the list of the words with *port*. Hence, speech-language pathologists and teachers will need to supplement the teaching of these Latin roots and Greek prefixes and suffixes with Anglo-Saxon prefixes and suffixes. My favorite book for this purpose is the following:

Ebbers, S. (2010). *Vocabulary through morphemes: Suffixes, prefixes, and roots for intermediate and secondary grades* (2nd ed.). Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Note

You can find the words for a rap song about prefixes, suffixes, and roots at <http://www.educationalrap.com/song/prefixes-suffixes-roots.html> and you can hear the rap at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOJrjNR7ZZM>

Word of Mouth welcomes creative therapy activities for Idea Swap. E-mail your ideas to mocha@unm.edu or mail to Carol Westby, 1808 Princeton NE, Albuquerque, NM 87106.



By Carol Westby

Linguistic Coding of Theory of Mind

In the last 20 years, many articles have been about the “theory of mind” (ToM). Researchers have reported on the development of ToM, strategies for assessing ToM, and ToM deficits in persons with a variety of disabilities. This article presents a strategy for coding or documenting the language persons use that reflect ToM. ToM is essential for comprehension of narratives.

If students are to comprehend and produce characterization and plot in their narratives, they must be aware of the thoughts, feelings, and intentions of characters. Most narratives unfold simultaneously on two levels, the *landscape of action*, which represents the events within story time and the *landscape of consciousness* or of human perception of those events (what those involved in the action know, think, or feel, or do not know, think, or feel; Bruner, 1986). Landscape of

consciousness can be considered a linguistic coding of theory of mind. Maximally coherent narratives create a landscape of consciousness, developing plot as events unfolding against a backdrop of alternative possible worlds created through diverse character perspectives. Landscapes of consciousness can be created in a variety of ways. Adjectives referring to emotions (e.g., *sad*, *angry*, *jealous*, *relieved*, *disappointed*) and metacognitive verbs (e.g., *think*, *guess*, *plan*, *remember*) create a landscape of consciousness. Counting the emotion and metacognitive words in a written narrative can provide a relatively quick measure of the landscape of consciousness. If one wants to develop students’ level of plot or characterization, one must develop students’ understanding of emotions and metacognition. Children younger than 9 years make some use of landscape of